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SIX DEFENDANTS SENTENCED FOR PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL CHILD EXPLOITATION ENTERPRISE

Five receive life terms

WASHINGTON and PENSACOLA, Fla. – Six U.S. defendants convicted for their activity in a global child pornography trafficking enterprise were sentenced today in the Northern District of Florida, Acting Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division Rita M. Glavin, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Florida Thomas F. Kirwin and FBI Executive Assistant Director J. Stephen Tidwell announced.

Five of the defendants were convicted following a six-day trial in January 2009 on multiple charges, including engaging in a child exploitation enterprise; conspiracy to advertise, transport, ship, receive and possess child pornography; advertising child pornography; transporting child pornography; receiving child pornography and obstruction of justice.

The defendants sentenced today by Senior U.S. District Judge Lacey A. Collier were Daniel Castleman of Lubbock, Texas; Gary Lakey of Anderson, Ind.; Marvin Lambert of Indianapolis; Neville McGarity of Medina, Texas; Stepan Bondarenko of Philadelphia; and Ronald White of Burlington, N.C. Five additional U.S. defendants also indicted in the case were sentenced on March 10, 2009.

According to evidence introduced at trial, the defendants were members of a highly-sophisticated international network. The group was a well-organized criminal enterprise whose purpose was to proliferate child sex abuse images to its membership during a two-year period.

The defendants were found guilty of participating in an illegal organization that utilized Internet newsgroups - large file-sharing networks where text, software, pictures and videos can be traded and shared - to traffic in illegal images and videos depicting prepubescent children, including toddlers, engaged in various sexual and sadistic acts. Specifically, an Australian constable who infiltrated the group in August 2006 testified at trial about how group members employed a complex system of pseudonyms, screening tests for new members and sophisticated encryption methods to avoid detection. He also testified that the group traded more than 400,000 images and 1,000 videos of child sexual abuse before it was dismantled by law enforcement.

Stepan Bondarenko was sentenced today to 20 years in prison. Bondarenko pleaded guilty on April 28, 2008, to four counts related to his criminal activities as a member of the child exploitation enterprise. The charges alleged in these counts included engaging in a child exploitation enterprise; conspiracy to advertise, transport, ship, receive and possess child pornography; advertising child pornography; and receiving child pornography.

Daniel Castleman, Gary Lakey, Marvin Lambert, Neville McGarity and Ronald White were all sentenced to terms of life in prison.

Castleman, Lakey, Lambert and McGarity, a registered sex offender, were all found guilty following a six-day trial on six counts relating to their criminal activities as a member of the child exploitation enterprise. The charges alleged in these counts included engaging in a child exploitation enterprise; conspiracy to advertise, transport, ship, receive and possess child pornography; advertising child pornography; transporting child pornography; receiving child pornography and obstruction of justice.

White was found guilty following trial on four counts relating to his criminal activities as a member of the child exploitation enterprise. The charges alleged in these counts included engaging in a child exploitation enterprise; conspiracy to advertise, transport, ship and possess child pornography; receiving child pornography and obstruction of justice.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse, launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David Goldberg of the Northern District of Florida and Trial Attorney LisaMarie Freitas of CEOS. The case is being investigated by the Innocent Images Unit of the FBI and the Queensland, Australia, Police Service, with the assistance of the Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) Child Pornography Unit in Germany and the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre in the United Kingdom.

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